

Education News & Notes

Using Digital Technology To Help Students With Visual Impairments Or Learning Disabilities

by *Richard O. Scribner*

(NAPSA)—Students who are visually impaired and students with learning and other physical disabilities have a new learning tool that provides unprecedented access to the printed page.

Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic® (RFB&D®) has introduced an inaugural collection of 6,000

digitally recorded, fully accessible textbooks on CD.

RFB&D's AudioPlus™ digitally recorded textbooks on CD level the playing field for students with disabilities because they offer navigation, bookmarking and playback options that significantly enhance study, research and reference assignments. To listen to RFB&D's AudioPlus textbooks, students need a CD player equipped to play RFB&D's books or a standard multimedia computer equipped with a CD-ROM drive and specialized software.

With RFB&D's AudioPlus textbooks, students will enjoy:

- **Instant access**—Digitally recorded textbooks allow instant access to any page, chapter or subheading in a book with the touch of a button; there's no need to fast-forward through and count embedded beep tones as is done with books recorded on analog cassette tape.

- **Convenience**—Digitally recorded textbooks are stored on CDs, which hold more than 40

hours of recorded material. Therefore, the contents of a standard textbook, which requires eight to 12 cassettes, will now fit onto a single CD.

- **Better audio quality**—Digital audio technology produces recordings with significantly less noise ("tape hiss") than analog recording.

RFB&D's AudioPlus textbooks have already been used in schools that participated in a pre-release pilot program. The students and educators involved in the program provided important feedback about the use of the CD textbooks, and their input has been used to continue to refine and enhance this technology.

RFB&D has also been outfitting its studios with new digital recording facilities and training its 5,400 volunteers in the digital recording process. As the transition takes place, the organization is converting its most frequently requested textbooks in its CV Starr Learning Through Listening™ Library to a digital format. RFB&D's Classic Cassettes™ will also remain available as long as there is a demand for them. Offering RFB&D's AudioPlus digitally recorded textbooks is just another way for RFB&D to serve its members by providing a wider choice of formats to meet their needs.

In addition to developing state-of-the-art reading technologies that make educational materials more accessible to students

with disabilities, RFB&D has also expanded its mission to offer effective strategies to help maximize the benefits of recorded textbooks.

RFB&D's national Educational Outreach Program targets students with print disabilities, their teachers and parents to make products and educational strategies more widely known and available. While the organization historically has offered individual memberships to students, RFB&D's Learning Through Listening Institutional Memberships provide accessible textbooks and teacher training to schools and districts to help educators integrate recorded textbooks into daily curricula. More than 4,000 schools have partnered with the organization through this program.

For more than 50 years, RFB&D has been the nation's educational library for people who cannot read standard print effectively because of a disability. Today it is the largest nonprofit organization of its kind, serving 102,000 students of all ages with its collection of 91,000 textbook titles in every subject area and grade level.

For more information about RFB&D's AudioPlus digitally recorded textbooks, call toll-free 1-866-RFBD-585 or visit the organization's award-winning Web site at www.rfbd.org.

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